

Dragon Friend

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Dragon Friend

****Dragon-Friend****

A/N These are just some very short stories about what it's like to have a Night Fury for a best friend. They didn't all happen on the same day.

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"_If you live to be a hundred, I want to live to be a hundred minus one day so I never have to live without you."
>(Winnie-the-Pooh (A.A. Milne))

"Ohhh, I'm _so_ sorry, was that your writing stick?" Snotlout knew darned well it was Hiccup's writing stick that he'd knocked away. He'd caught Hiccup drawing a patch of wildflowers in that notebook of his, and he was so nauseated at the sight, there was nothing he could do except swat the smaller boy's left hand and send the stick flying into the brush.

"Sorry about that, Hiccup. But I know it's no big loss. You can burn another stick any time you want. After all, _you_ have a _dragon!_" The burly youth went on his way, snickering into his hand, oblivious to Hiccup's angry glare.

The frustrated young artist turned to Toothless, who was lounging nearby. "I don't know what makes me madder â€" the fact that he likes bothering me so much, or the fact that he lies by saying he's sorry." Toothless raised one ear, but otherwise didn't move.

"Oh, well. I really want to finish this drawing, so I guess it'll be

faster to find my stick than make a new one." He shuffled toward the patch of brush where his stick had flown.

Suddenly his dragon leaped to his feet and jumped in front of him, blocking him from getting where he wanted to go. "Toothless, what are you doing?" He tried to get around the dragon, but the Night Fury was insistent; he wouldn't let Hiccup go that way.

"Toothless, quit it! I need to find that stick!" Hiccup was already irritated from what Snotlout had done; he didn't need his own dragon turning on him. "Come on! Let me get past you!" The dragon stopped, and Hiccup stepped around him. But as he approached the brush, the Night Fury breathed out a small fireball that blasted a three-foot crater in front of his friend, incinerating the brush all around it.

"What has gotten into you, you useless reptile? You probably just burned up my drawing stick!" The dragon didn't move as Hiccup stepped into the burnt zone. It was then that he saw what Toothless had heard and smelled.

"An adder! Is that what you were protecting me from?" Common adders were the only poisonous snakes in the Northland. Their venom was always painful, but rarely fatal... except to people who were thin and weak. This particular adder would never bite anyone again. Its charred remains were just a few inches from the smoldering remnants of Hiccup's drawing stick.

"Bud, I'm sorry I didn't trust you. I ought to know better by now." He hugged the thick black neck; Toothless looked mildly surprised. "If I told people you killed an adder, they'd think I said you killed a Nadder, and that would just be too confusing to sort out. I'll keep this between the two of us. I guess you saved my life again. Thanks, bud."

The dragon made a puzzled sound. Why was Hiccup so surprised? Aren't friends supposed to look out for each other?

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"The most I can do for my friend is simply be his friend."
>(Henry David Thoreau)

"Stupid rain!"

They'd been having a great flight together. He'd finally taught Toothless what a barrel roll was. Once he got the idea, the dragon fully approved of the maneuver, because the force of the roll kept Hiccup tightly in the saddle instead of threatening to pull him out of it, like a spin-roll did. Now it was time for some power-diving and zoom-climbing, which would always be the Night Fury's favorite maneuvers.

The only trouble was, the heavens had opened, and Hiccup was getting wet fast.

They were out over the ocean; there was no cover below them. The forest on the north side of Berk was closer than the village, but wouldn't shelter them as well as being indoors. Hiccup decided to let his dragon choose where they'd ride out the storm. "Toothless, get us

out of this rain!"

The dragon went _up_.

The rain was beading up and streaming off the dragon's glossy black scales. It was only soaking into Hiccup's hair and clothing, and seemed to be getting more intense the higher they got. "Buddy, I don't have any more clean clothes at home! If I have to wear this wet stuff all day, I'll get sick, and Dad will be mad at both of us. Astrid will, too, but she'll take it all out on me! Come on, get us someplace dry!"

They went up into the clouds. The rain was replaced by fine mist that did a fine job of making Hiccup even wetter than before. Up, up they went.

Then they broke out _above_ the clouds, and it was sunny and dry. Toothless glanced back at his rider, very pleased with his own cleverness. He'd done exactly what Hiccup asked him to do, and he'd brought him into a dry zone a lot faster than if he'd dived for shelter on land.

"Very nice, bud, except it's _cold_ up here, I'm still soaking wet, and we can't stay here all day." Toothless snorted at that last part. He could stay up here until tomorrow if he wanted to!

Hiccup began to shiver. Without thinking, he lay down on Toothless' back. His intent was just to get his body out of the slipstream so he wouldn't be so cold. Once he was prone, he realized how warm the dragon was. He pressed himself flat against the broad back. His shivering stopped. He half-closed his eyes.

"Okay, bud, you're the pilot. Let me know when you need some tail control. We can stay here until the rain stops. I guess the wind will dry me off, and you'll keep me from freezing.

"It's kind of nice up here, just you and me."

The Night Fury let out a grunt that probably meant, _Of course it is,_ and settled in for a long, relaxing glide. He'd wait until the rain below them let up, before he took them home. They might have to stay up here for hours.

What a shame, to have to spend the whole day flying.

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"_A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."
>(Proverbs 18:24)

Ruffnut and Tuffnut were having _way_ too much fun in the newly fallen snow. It was the wet stuff, not the dry powdery stuff, which meant it was ideal for packing into rock-hard snowballs to throw at each other. They didn't try to take cover behind trees or buildings; that would take all the fun out of it. No, they pummeled each other as fast and as hard as they could, and _getting_ hit made them laugh almost as much as _scoring_ a hit.

Hiccup and Toothless walked past them on the way to the forge. He

gave them a quick glance on the way by. He knew he'd never understand the way those two thought. With a shake of the head, he kept on going.

Once his back was turned, Tuff unloaded a Super Bomb, a double-sized snowball that took all his strength to throw. He'd intended to make his sister the target for this ultimate frozen projectile, but the back of Hiccup's head was too tempting. Years of practice against Ruffnut had given him good aim.

The force of the blow, combined with the surprise of it, knocked Hiccup to his hands and knees in the snow.

Hiccup picked himself up, dried his hands on his vest, checked the back of his head for blood, and sadly kept on walking. There was no use getting mad; it never helped, and it usually made things worse. He didn't bother checking for the twins' reactions, and he didn't see Toothless' eyes contract into angry little slits, either.

The twins doubled over into hysterical laughter. They'd inflicted pain on an unsuspecting target â€" how great was that?! They spared an occasional glance at their victim as he slumped away, which only made them laugh harder. They paid no attention at all to the dragon.

That was why, when Toothless scooped up two cubic feet of snow with his tail fin, and launched it with full dragon force and perfect Night Fury accuracy, they never saw it coming.

The force of this blow sent Tuffnut flying twelve feet through the air before he plowed into the snow, face-first. His laughter abruptly stopped (it's hard to laugh with a mouthful of snow), which left his sister howling in mirth at his predicament. She was focused on him and not the dragon, so Toothless' second mega-snowball took her out as thoroughly as his first one had done for her brother.

They spat the snow out of their mouths, shook their heads clear, wiped their eyes, and stared. All they saw was Hiccup, walking away dejectedly, and Toothless, staring back at them, wide-eyed and innocent. After a moment, the dragon turned and trotted through the snow to catch up with his friend.

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As Hiccup and his dragon walked home that evening, the twins were still at it. Surely they hadn't spent the whole day throwing snowballs at each other? No, the snow would be all gone if that were the case. They must have taken a break to do all their day's chores, then come back to their sport. As he watched, Ruff scored a bull's-eye on Tuff's helmet, spinning it around and almost knocking it off.

Tuff's eyes gleamed with malice. He wound up for a return shot and heaved his frozen missile at his sister with all his might.

Ten feet away from her, the snowball met a tiny blue fireball and was instantly vaporized.

"Hey, that's cheating!"

>"You guys, stay out of this!"<p>

Hiccup just grinned at Toothless and kept walking. The dragon remained vigilant.

It was Ruffnut's turn. She toyed with the idea of throwing one at Hiccup, but realized it would be a waste of a good snowball, as long as that dragon was around. She threw it at her brother instead. Toothless turned that snowball into a puff of steam, too. He did it again when Tuff lobbed a Super Bomb at Ruff.

"Oh, come on!"

>"That's not fair!"
"Call off your dragon!"

Hiccup shrugged. "You guys must have done something to make him mad." He kept walking, the twins kept throwing snowballs at each other, and Toothless kept using their snowballs for target practice until the twins were steaming mad. When his fires finally ran low, he ambled away to catch up with his friend.

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"_Interesting. Where would you estimate we belong...?"

>"You? At his side. As if you've always been there and always will."
(The City on the Edge of Forever (Star Trek))_

Toothless awoke in the middle of the night. Something was wrong. Hiccup was asleep, but his stress level was rising; Toothless could always tell when his friend was upset. The boy was rolling back and forth in the bed, moaning, "No... no..." What was wrong?

The dragon became fully alert. He looked, listened, and smelled for anything that might be a threat to Hiccup. He saw nothing in the darkness; he heard nothing but Stoick's steady snoring downstairs; he smelled nothing out of the ordinary. But something was upsetting his friend badly.

Suddenly the boy sat upright in bed, screaming, "_NO!_ Don't let it...!" He opened his eyes, breathing hard, trembling harder, looking all around in a panic. Dragons didn't understand about nightmares. If Hiccup had tried to explain how real the Red Death had seemed just a moment ago, Toothless couldn't have made head or tail of it.

The room was dark except for the moonlight. There was nothing for Hiccup to see except the shadows of his bedroom furniture, and the darker-than-dark shape of his dragon friend, sitting on the floor next to his bed, with his pale green eyes shining with concern. He flung his arms around the dragon's neck, desperate for any comfort he could find. Part of his mind realized it was just a dream, but dreams die hard in the middle of the night.

Toothless felt his friend close against him. Good; it would be easier to protect him that way. He still couldn't tell what had upset him so badly. Nothing was out of the ordinary. Surely something had to be different, to have caused this...?

The only things that had changed were that Hiccup was clinging to him, and he was beginning to relax.

Slowly, Toothless lowered himself to the floor. He rolled on one side and wrapped both forelegs around Hiccup, then enfolded him in a wing.

You're safe. I won't let it hurt you, whatever it is. The boy stopped shaking; his breath became slower and less strained. Gradually he passed back into the realm of sleep. His arms were still wrapped tightly around the dragon's neck.

Toothless stayed awake for another half-hour, just to make sure there was no threat. Finally, he let his head droop to the floor and fell back asleep himself.

Had anyone else been in the room, he might have noticed that boy and dragon were breathing in perfect unison.

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